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ABSTRACT

In this update of the integration efforts of the Riverside Unified School District, it is shown that the district continues to be committed to the integration of the staff. It is also committed to search for minority heritage staff. Along with staffing changes, there have been major program developments such as finding and using ethnic oriented materials. Some activities that have emerged are parent advisory groups, student involvement in board meetings and regulations development, special programs for minority students, district reorganization of the two year middle schools and four year senior high schools. All these program developments were encouraged with the reorganization of the district into a more open management system. This system allowed for much broader participation in planning and decision making. Student performance has been carefully measured over the years of the integration effort. Achievement gains for minority students are evident for the primary grades, but for the sixth grade the findings are not clearcut. It is evident, however, that achievement is higher than before desegregation. Throughout the desegregation effort, community and parent attitude measures have been collected. These indicate very strong community support. Among the conclusions derived from the Riverside desegregation experience are that: (1) integrated staffs at all levels are vital, (2) guidelines and standards for behavior must be clear and firm, and (3) an understanding of the goals of public education is vital. (Author/AM)

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RIVERSIDE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

INTEGRATION UPDATE

by Dr. Ray Berry
Superintendent

May, 1976

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An attempt to tell the entire story of our decade of effort to desegregate and integrate the Riverside Unified School District would take at least one good-sized book. If we include all the details of the hundreds of meetings, adjustments, decisions, etc., more than one volume would be required.

On the other hand, too brief an outline seems inadequate, because a desegregation-integration effort is far more than just a paper product. It takes people to make it work. Also, people make it fail. Unawareness of the need to pay attention to all those human interrelationships may well be the reason integration works in some school systems and fails in others.

In 1975-76, all the court cases, political campaigns, and various other struggles regarding integration have caused some of us to forget that the scene was significantly different in 1965. At that time, the Riverside Unified School District Board of Education voluntarily acted to initiate desegregation of three elementary schools and to integrate the school system. The detail of all that decision is contained in well-written records and does not need amplification here.

We should not forget, however, that the original decision by the Board was for the purpose of offering equal educational opportunity to all. The goal was not social integration of the community or any other broad, sweeping concepts. The Board believed, and many citizens believed, that a well-rounded education was not available in a segregated school and that all children of all races could learn better and could develop mutual respect and appreciation better in integrated schools.

Major research efforts regarding the entire program have been conducted, largely with outside grants. A great deal of information exists and is being written. All too often, success or failure of integration efforts is measured by very narrow definitions of test scores on pupil achievement. Such measures are important; but, in my opinion, they do not begin to tell what we need to know concerning the impact of a program similar to ours. We must continue looking at the entire picture and not just a segment.

For instance, an integrated school system probably cannot exist without an integrated staff at all levels. We set out early to integrate the staff of the

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district and have kept at it constantly. Major integration of adults was generated early in this plan by employing large numbers of various kinds of aides to work with teachers, administrators, and students. As rapidly as people could be found, teachers and administrators of various minority heritages have been employed and assigned. From 1968 to 1975, the certificated staff (administrators and teachers) rose from 4.7 percent to 12.6 percent.

The district is committed to continued effort to improve as rapidly as possible along these lines. A high demand for minority heritage personnel exists in education today and severe competition occurs among districts. Consequently, availability of candidates is reduced. Along with these factors, recent declining enrollment has prevented the district from making early offers because it now must hire to specific vacancies instead of making general offers. In addition, during the same period of 1968 to 1975, the district had 71 minority heritage resignations because these professionals have broad job availability and advancement opportunities. In a very real way, Riverside has been a training ground for leaders.

The district continues with its firm commitment to search for minority heritage staff, as evidenced during the past four years in which 24.8 percent of the newly employed certificated staff were of minority heritage. Continued effort at affirmative action commitments is a must. Emphasis needs to be placed on training and assigning various minorities into highly visible leadership roles.

Along with staffing changes, any effort to integrate must include major program developments. An obvious one is procurement and use of ethnic-oriented materials. This has been done and made available to all youngsters. However, needed program developments are much broader than that. Many have occurred in Riverside. Part of them are directly involved with integration, and part are aimed at the broader needs to more effectively educate all children.

Such efforts include the Board commitment to individualize education. One example is the Learning Achievement Through Saturated Educational Resources Program (LASER) at Longfellow School and, more recently, the commitment to the Riverside Instructional Support System for all schools.

Many other activities have emerged including parent advisory groups in each school, student involvement in such functions as Board meetings and regulations development, minority students special programs, district reorganization of the two-year middle schools and four-year senior high schools, major special education changes, intervention rooms, team teaching, major building programs, federal projects participation, bilingual education, fine arts development in all areas and levels including cultural arts, secondary flexible programming, major in-service programs, and many more over the years.

All these program developments were encouraged with the reorganization of the district into a more open management system which allowed for much broader participation in planning and decision making. This approach was developed in order to utilize skills which had been developed in industry on how to most effectively use the great resources of employees of an organization. The greatest contributions come from commitment. Commitment comes from a feeling of belonging and pride; hence, the district has worked for several years at a decentralization commitment.

Some of the research by scientists indicate at an early stage that many children of all heritages had trouble with speech and language patterns. From this emerged programs ranging all the way from trained therapists to special tutors. The research also indicated that in one year of integrated classroom experience, significant changes occurred in children's speech patterns which made it easier for them to participate effectively in learning processes.

Also, early in the research there seemed to be clear evidence that learning in public schools is related to socio-economic and educational status of the family. When the family places high value on learning, the child is more likely to fit readily into the learning processes and learning rates of fellow students. Children who had been in segregated elementary schools who also had positive attitudes about learning seemed to move most rapidly in accelerating their performance when they moved to integrated situations.

In addition, minority children who had been integrated during or before second grade seemed to avoid falling into the patterns of self-denigration. In other words, children did not begin to drop behind district patterns at a more rapid rate at about 8 years if they had been integrated during the early years. In segregated schools, there had been a familiar pattern of children starting well and then dropping behind so that by the time they reached the 6th grade, they were as much as two years below district levels on achievement measures.

As was indicated earlier, test data do form one important measure of success or failure in integration efforts. The fundamental question which is constantly raised about school desegregation is, "Do children learn more because of it?" We believe that in Riverside the answer is "yes." We believe that there are many outcomes of education that are enhanced as a direct result of desegregation, including a greater appreciation for cultures that exist in and contribute to our community. However, the question of "greater achievement" is usually more narrowly construed and what is meant is, "What do the reading and math scores show?"

We have kept careful measure over the years of the integration effort in Riverside Unified School District of the performance of all children of the three major

race groups. Performances of all children from the beginning have generally been upward from year to year.

From the standardized test data collected in the Riverside Unified School District since 1969, a few years after integration began, it is possible to state unequivocally that in the primary grades there has been a general trend toward higher reading achievement. Our data show that from 1969 to 1975, at first grade level the average achievement of Blacks has increased by 18 percentile points on the national average, that the average achievement of Mexican-American children has increased by 16 percentile points, and that the achievement of Anglo children has increased by 30 percentile points.

At the end of the third grade, the results are equally impressive. Black children have increased their average reading achievement by 15 percentile points on national norms, Mexican-American have increased 18 percentile points, and Anglos have increased by 11 percentile points.

Sixth grade achievement has been a puzzle for us. In the Riverside district, achievement at sixth grade has followed the national trend, showing a gradual decline of about seven percentile points over the years. Fortunately, it appears that in Riverside the trend was reversed in the testing of May, 1975, and we anticipate an increase in sixth grade scores for the next several years as those children who profited in 1970, 1971, 1972, and 1973 from the greatly improved primary instruction move through our upper elementary grades.

To secure a better picture of what has happened to sixth grade achievement over the years of desegregation, we went back to the Stanford Achievement Test scores we collected in the early 1960's. We did not summarize scores by ethnicity at that time, but we did have Irving Elementary School, which was a segregated school for Black children, and we also had Casa Blanca Elementary School, a segregated school for Mexican-American children. Basing our analyses on test scores from those two schools as representative of minority achievement before desegregation, we can say that even with the sixth grade decline since 1969, Black children in 1975 achieved at a slightly higher level than pre-desegregation. Mexican-American children were slightly higher in math and almost one year higher in reading in 1975 than pre-desegregation. Anglos were at the same level in math but were almost a half a year higher in reading in 1975 than pre-desegregation.

We believe part of the academic successes or failures of our youngsters is tied to the home. We believe that there is strong evidence which indicates that wherever a close working relationship with the home can be established, the performance and behavior of the student go up significantly. This is the primary reason for the establishment of programs which draw parents into working relationships with the schools in all kinds of situations.

Need for establishing close home ties at early ages plus recognition of the necessity for strong language development programs led to our writing and producing a new kindergarten effort. The approach includes twenty books which became vehicles for language introduction, home involvement, and reading readiness. The impact has been great on both attitude and measured achievement. For 1975-76, in the specific measure of knowledge of letters and sounds, our kindergartners in the lowest quartile (one-fourth of the group) scored at or near national norms, and our highest quartile did better than 90 percent of the rest of the nation.

High transiency rates within segments of school communities and the rapid moving in and out of school attendance areas and from city to city make continuity of instruction extremely difficult. The lowest transiency rate of a school attendance area in Riverside is 16 percent; the highest exceeds 60 percent.

It is this need to build in continuity for all youngsters throughout the city, plus the desire to build upon clearly successful programs, which led to the recent adoption of the Riverside Support System Instruction Program. This approach gives a basic set of materials and procedures for making certain that each child performs at his utmost level in the basic skills areas--reading, writing, and math.

Another research conclusion and district finding indicate clearly that double standards for behavior or performance are defeating and destructive to progress. Staff members are sorely tempted to adapt rules and expectancies to race and family status. District insistence upon single standards does not mean that school and home do not seek to find ways to adapt to need of individuals. Such adaptation is a must, but the goals must remain constantly high.

Throughout the entire effort of the district to desegregate and integrate its schools, careful measures of community and parent attitude have been conducted. Trained interviewers have sampled the parents of children of all ethnic groups throughout the system. Results of these measures have been reported by Dr. Jane Mercer, sociologist at U.C.R., and Dr. Hazel Russell, Director of Special Federal Programs in the school district. These measures continue to demonstrate very strong community support from persons of all heritages for the concept of integrated schools.

A study by Dr. Russell of 334 Anglos, Blacks, and Mexican-American parents showed that the majority of all these ethnic groups after seven years of desegregation were somewhat or strongly favorable toward desegregation. Her 1973 study reported that 62 percent opposed separate ethnic schools for children and 87 percent favored continuing desegregation under the present plan or another plan. Ninety-one percent said they did not want to return to segregated schools, and 61 percent of the parents believed desegregation of Riverside Schools opened the way for residential integration.

This community support has also been demonstrated by the fact that since the Riverside Unified School District began its desegregation effort in 1965, we have passed an $18.5 million bond issue for school building purposes, and we have passed two tax overrides for general budget support--one for 50 cents and one for 84 cents. In addition, all Board members who chose to run for reelection have been reelected. Board members have included a Mexican-American who served two terms. More recently (1976), a Black citizen was elected along with two white women, all of whom were opposed by a "fundamentalist" slate of candidates. The vote was not close.

The superintendent who served at the time of the desegregation effort retired in 1968, after 17 successful years. The current superintendent was appointed from within the system. He had been significantly involved in the desegregation process. No "white flight" from the community has been detected in any form; in fact, there seems to be evidence of persons transferring into the school system in order to participate in the Riverside schools.

During the 10 years of the desegregation effort, Riverside City has grown and changed. The total population has increased from 133,219 to 159,000. The school district enrollment has changed with shifts in city population. In addition, the birth rate of the American population has directly affected Riverside Unified School District enrollment. The years of rapid growth after World War II finally terminated at the end of the 1960's. Smaller birth rate years of children moving into elementary school began to reduce enrollment in the 1970's. The district now has about 3,000 fewer youngsters than it had at that time.

As the decline in enrollment occurred, more spaces became available throughout the school system--thus making it possible to consider reallocation of the original master plan for integration. This has been under study, along with the study of school sizes by administration and a Board committee. Wherever specific adjustments seemed to be dictated by the circumstances, contacts have been made with parents and with school staffs and adjustments either were made or proposed for further study.

There also have been some shift in minority ratios in school population. At the time of desegregation in 1965, there were about 21 percent minority heritage youngsters in the district. In 1976, there are about 31 percent.

These various shifts in population numbers and makeup have led the district to examine its sizes of schools and the racial balance of the school populations. Over the years of the integration effort, a number of boundary adjustments--both large and small--have been made.

In 1968, a monitoring of the housing patterns in the community indicated that boundary changes were necessary at both Emerson and Longfellow elementary schools in order to move toward ethnic balance at these two schools. In August, 1968, all elementary pupils new to a defined area who would normally attend

Emerson Elementary School were transported to Hyatt and Highland elementary schools. These schools were ethnically balanced, and still remain ethnically balanced, as a result of this change. This action reduced the ethnic imbalance at Emerson.

In 1971, the boundaries for Emerson were again changed because of new housing being constructed in that area. The purpose of the boundary change was to increase the Anglo population of that school and again seek ethnic balance.

During these same years, several adjustments occurred at secondary level between high schools and middle schools in order to make certain that those schools remained ethnically balanced and that the residential areas of the community are adequately served. One such adjustment included the creation of a fourth senior high school and the appropriate changes to keep all the schools within size range as well as balance. As always, the ultimate goal behind such decisions was education improvements and not just control of numbers.

In 1968, some 111 youngsters from Longfellow Elementary School were reassigned to ethnically balanced schools, reducing the minority percentage at Longfellow to approximately 36 percent. At the same time, a special program was initiated to provide a highly enriched program at that school. Student achievement at Longfellow has been at the top of the district.

In 1974, a portion of the Highland Elementary School attendance area was assigned to Hyatt Elementary School to balance school size and assist in the overall ethnic composition at both schools.

In 1975, a mobile home park in the Harrison Elementary School area was assigned to Liberty Elementary School to reduce the school population at Harrison and provide additional potential enrollment at Liberty.

These are just a few examples of the district's continuing boundary analysis with emphasis upon balancing ethnic enrollment among our schools.

It is particularly important to watch for school trends so that changes in size or changes in minority ratio can be worked with at a time and in such a manner that the adjustments do not become traumatic. They remain a natural part of the function of the school system.

Another important arena in the whole area of school desegregation is the matter of helping the staff, student, and citizens of the community become knowledgeable and aware of both the need and the processes for school integration and equal educational opportunity. A great many inservice courses of all types have been held throughout the school district over the years. Some research has been conducted on what is the best type of inservice, and evidence exists which strongly suggests that when people can work together upon efforts or goals that are mutually accepted between them on behalf of children, they learn to work together

and, in the process, to develop respect and appreciation for each other. Therefore, most of the inservice programs of the school district tend to be task-oriented, workshop-type efforts.

Unfortunately, there just doesn't seem to be any neat, clear pattern which can be put on paper and applied by effective administrators in a community or school district which will guarantee successful desegregation-integration. The question has often been asked why integration works in one place and fails in another. Again, there are no clear, clean answers. When we try to reach for the answers in response to the questions, such words as "integrity," "commitment," "respect," "caring," and other human relations-type statements tend to get used.

The fact is that desegregation-integration efforts have worked very well in hundreds of school systems across the nation. However, success stories do not make news very often. The "problem" communities are the ones which become highly visible, and such publicity tends to develop negative attitudes and false stereotypes about "bussing" (sic).

A quick summarization of key points which have been deduced from the Riverside experience include:

1. The goal of public education is good education for all citizens. Desegregation-integration is just one of the many things that are required to achieve the goal. This understanding and emphasis are vital.

2. Children of various heritages do not have to sit next to each other in order to perform effectively academically. They do need to be together in order to lay a foundation for a pluralistic society which is not racist. In most communities, children cannot attend school together without moving them around. Buses are required.

3. Political campaign harangue about "bussing" and "neighborhood schools" at every level has hurt national efforts to comply with the equal opportunity laws. At local level, opposition by school board members and superintendents is deadly. Staunch, courageous, unified commitment is virtually a must in success. Such commitment is also reassuring and tends to generate support in a community.

4. Accurate and comprehensive news media reporting is vital. Selective reporting or sensationalism is destructive. Also, complete dependence upon public media is both unwise and unfair. Citizens need avenues of communication of every possible type, including citizens' groups, school bulletins, rumor control devices, etc.

5. Realtors can be major factors in establishing attitudes about schools. Realtor associations are usually open to communication, and they normally have sophisticated communication devices available through their associations, even including school attendance area maps, etc. Good schools and good information sell houses and other property developments. Also, evidence is clear in Riverside that integrated schools accelerate open housing and family mobility.

6. Integrated staffs at all levels are vital. All staff members need help in relating to each other and to students and community. Lectures will not do the job. Neither will sensitivity sessions. The people who need the help must participate in the planning. The "how," not "whether," is open to a process of deciding what works best.

7. Double standards in any program, including instruction, grading, and discipline, are ultimately destructive. Guidelines and standards for behavior and performance must be clear and firm. Again, the question becomes one of not "whether" but "how." Schools and staffs have to develop flexibility in order to cope. For some parents and kids, a phone call or a note is enough. For others, whole new resources and time lines must be created. Either way, the goal of achievement and reasonable conformity and of dignity and self-respect is a must for all. Prejudice or favoritism is unacceptable in any guise.

8. Neighborhood schools are almost a sacred byword in our public education heritage. However, they need an updated definition. We will continue to have schools as neighborhood and community centers, but they will serve children from other places for many reasons--blind, hard of hearing, retarded, gifted, multilingual, physically handicapped, learning disabilities--and even racial differences.

9. Life styles which seem to be associated with deprivations emerging from poverty will conflict in schools with habits and values of middle class. Ethnic differences intensify the conflict incidents. Deep-seated fears and hostilities surface at home and in the community when fights, intimidation, extortion, property abuse, and language differences or vulgarities occur.

   When viewed alone or out of context, most of these are relatively minor. Collectively and in the context of integration emotions, they become significant roadblocks.

   Specific programs aimed at control and understanding can help. No incident is too little to ignore. Openness and fairness are vital in both action and communication.

10. Once again, the point has to be stressed that good education is the absolute goal. Serve each child well despite poverty, transiency, appearance, heritage, or any other "difference," and we have a much better chance for a pluralistic nation--or even a nation!

Incidentally, it is often ignored in various studies, but one of the key factors in various successes of the Riverside effort is that voluntary local impetus instead of a court order led to the original decision. Outside imposition of compliance with the law is probably necessary at times, but it can greatly increase the resistance--especially if the leaders of the schools and community want it to.